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ABSTRACT

A study examined the effectiveness of a Reading Recovery program. Subjects, 14 first-grade students who received the Reading Recovery program and 20 first-grade students who did not receive the program, were administered the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in the spring of 1994. The subject population was comprised of 100% minority students attending James Weldon Johnson Public School, which is located in a predominantly low socioeconomic neighborhood in Chicago's Lawndale community. Comparison of test scores indicated no statistically significant difference in reading achievement of the sample groups. Followup research is needed as the number of students increase going into the Reading Recovery program. (Contains 15 references and one table of data.) (RS)

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ED 380 775

READING RECOVERY VERSES INFORMAL READING INSTRUCTION ON THE READING ACHIEVEMENT OF PRESCCHOOLERS AT THE END OF FIRST GRADE

Merry Jelks- Emmanuel

Over the years the quality of education in our "nation" schools has been studied repeatedly. Research at the preschool level indicates that children from low socio economics make considerable academic gains when placed in preschool programs (Darlington et al,1980; and Klaus, 1970). On the other hand Caruso and Detterman (1981) state that these academic gains cannot be obtained consistently.

Early childhood programs have taken on new meanings with the reconceptualization of teaching and learning for young children through programs that are being implemented and supportive. Of these programs, emergent literacy and in particular, the Reading Recovery Program is one that holds great potential for reading achievement of young learners.

There are several research studies that support the use of the Reading Recovery Program. Rinehart and Short (1991) found that teachers could change the way of teaching using open-ended questions, categorical replies and analyzing children information. Weaver (1991) brought attention to the Reading Recovery Program as a way to help students with reading difficulties.

From the current research on Reading Recovery, there is evidence that it does have both immediate and long term effects. This study will add to the state of knowledge on Reading Recovery. The results of this study will have value to teachers, parents, and administrators.

In Reviewing the literature, educational researchers have just begun to examine the effects of academic achievement of preschool students during the last twenty years. Attempts at documenting specific outcomes in preschool education were rarely done until the compensatory movement of the 60's. This research was dominated by immediate, and summative program effects. Longitudinal follow up studies were still limited (Evans, 1985).

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In most studies, low socioeconomic children make considerable gains from preschool (Darlington et al.,1980; Gray and Klaus, 1970; Lazar, 1983). But others such as Caruso and Detterman suggested that positive academic gains could not be obtained consistently. (Caruso and Detterman, 1981).

According to Schweinhart et al. (1985) the advantage of early childhood intervention was to keep problems to a minimum through effective treatment. It is the belief of some early professionals that cognitive intervention early on was beneficial for young children. Children from high- risk, and the underprivileged child appear to gain the most from these high-quality early intervention programs both academically and socially (McCormick 1986).

On the other hand some educators thought that exposure to academics in preschool was taking away their childhood (Zigler, 1986) causing undue pressure, bad attitudes toward school in the future, hence a waste of educators time since children have not reached a proper developmental level and therefore cannot learn (Elkind, 1986).

Lazar (1981) and several other researchers studied fifteen independent experiments that led to the creation off the headstart program. In his conclusions, children in headstart programs performed at or above grade level.

In a study by Osterlind (1980-81) three groups of children were examined at the end of kindergarten to determine the effects the effects of preschool participation on academic and social performances. In conclusion the authors were in agreement that reschool participation did make a difference.

Early intervention programs have taken on new meanings with the reconceptualization of teaching and learning for young children through programs that are being implemented and supportive.

One early intervention program that goes hand in hand with this is the Reading Recovery Program that was designed as an early intervention for first grade students at risk of failing in reading. The Reading Recovery Program originated in New Zealand where it was developed and validated by Marie Clay.

To date studies on emergent reading and writing programs of preschoolers have concentrated on reading or writing development. Very few studies (Dahl, 1988; Harste, burke, and Woodward 1983) have given an array of reading and writing skills with different literacy and language demands to the same sample of children.

Research on emergent literacy presents young children as displaying an assortment off non conventional reading and writing behaviors before entering school (Barnhart, 1988; Clay, 1975; Harste, Burme and woodwind, 1983). There is evidence that supports the proposition of the behaviors that are legitimate aspects of the development of reading and writing before the development into conventional literacy (Sulzby 1988; Teale and Sulzby, 1986).

The Reading Recovery program was bought to the United States by staff from Ohio University where it was piloted in 1984-1985. Reading Recovery is designed for first grade children that are "at risk" of failing reading. It's components are: !) special training for teachers; 2) combining interrelated reading and writing; 3) intensive daily instruction; 4) one-to-one instruction and 5) interaction between teacher and student that supports the development of effective cognitive strategies.

Research on the Reading Recovery Program by Rinehart and Short (1991) found that teachers could change the way of teaching using open-ended questions, categorical replies, and analyzing information of children.

Students entering into the Reading Recovery Program undergoes diagnostic testing and teacher recommendations from the lowest 20 percent of children tested. Weaver (1991) brought attention to Reading Recovery as a great tool in helping students with reading difficulties. He regarded the Reading Recovery Program as having the potentials of utilizing whole language in classroom learning for creating reading, writers, and learners.

From the research, there is evidence that Reading Recovery has both immediate and long-term effects. The immediate effects are believed to be substantial and dramatic. Opit's (1991) study related to the positive effectiveness of the program calls for more research as to why the program works. However, the longitudinal data provide evidence that Reading Recovery teaches even very low achieving children how to read and spell (Office of Educational Research and improvement, 1989).

In summary, the review of literature on the effects of Reading Recovery verses informal reading instruction of preschoolers at the end of the first grade covered the following: 1) Conflicting results on the effects of academic achievement of preschoolers. Some researchers found considerable academic gains while others suggested that the academic gains could not be obtained consistently. 2) cognitive intervention programs when implemented early were found beneficial. 3) "at risk" students tended to benefit more from the cognitive intervention programs; 4)

preschoolers exposure to academics took away their childhood, creating undue pressure to succeed. 5) the Reading Recovery Program is one of the emerging literacy programs designed for students in first grade who are "at risk" of learning to read; 6) Reading Recovery has both immediate and long term effects. and 7) more research is needed to determine why and if the program works.

Procedures

The population for this study will include 34 first grade students. The students attend James Weldon Johnson Public School which is located in a predominantly low socioeconomic neighborhood in Chicago's Lawndale Community. The population is comprised of 100% minority students.

From the 34 first grade students, the school records showed that 14 first grade students received the Reading Recovery Program while 20 did not receive the program

Each Spring the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered in the Chicago Public Elementary Schools. Two samples were identified from the school records. 1). Those first grade students who had received the Reading Recovery Program, and 2). Those first grade students who had not received the Reading Recovery Program. The reading results of the ITBS administered during the Spring of 1994 will be used in this study. The post test only design will be used for this study.

Findings of the Study

The samples for the study included 34 first grade students of Johnson Elementary School. Each Spring students take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Students were grouped accordingly: 14 students were selected for the Reading Recovery Program (formal Reading instruction), and 20 students were given regular reading instruction (informal reading instruction). The results from the 1994 ITBS reading subtests were used. A t test ($p<.05$) for independent samples was done on the two sets of scores to determine if there was a statistically significant change in reading achievement after exposure to the Reading Recovery Reading Program. Table 1 Summarizes the statistical analyses.

Table 1
Reading Achievement

Test	Formal N = 14	Informal N = 20	t
M	14	20	
SD	12.07	22.33	1.02

df = 32 $p>.05$
* significant at the .05 level

Examination of the 1994 test scores revealed that after one year in the Reading Recovery Program the sample group (Reading Recovery group) mean scores are 1.93 while the informal reading sample mean (regular reading instruction) mean scores are 1.97 respectively. Therefore, there is no statistical significant difference in reading achievement of the sample groups. The t scores for 1994 is 1.02. The overall data leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis: Preschoolers receiving Reading recovery program will not obtain significantly higher reading scores than those preschoolers receiving informal reading instruction.

Follow up research is needed as the number of students increase going into the Reading Recovery Program. The results are not suprising because the review of literature indicated that the Reading Recovery Program is effective in helping students reach grade level in Reading. Weaver (1991) regarded the Reading Recovery program as having the potential for creating reading, writers, and learners. Optit's (1991) also stated in his study that the immediate effects of Reading Recovery are believed to be substantial and dramatic. The results for this study might have resulted in different findings if the researcher had more control on method of data collection and the population had been larger thus allowing more control of the extraneous variable.

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